

Government of Honduras – U.S. Government Joint Statement
from the Bilateral Human Rights Working Group

On September 13, 2012 in Tegucigalpa, senior delegations from the Government of United States of America and the Republic of Honduras met to advance bilateral collaboration on human rights, the rule of law, the strengthening of democratic institutions, and other areas of mutual interest. The Honduran delegation was led by Ana A. Pineda H., Minister of Justice and Human Rights and the U.S. delegation was led by Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Maria Otero.

The two governments decided to establish a High Level Bilateral Human Rights Working Group to elevate and broaden our collaboration on issues related to human rights and the rule of law. It was also decided that the High Level Bilateral Human Rights Working Group would meet annually to review progress and establish mutually determined objectives for two bilateral sub-working groups on human rights that would be established, one in each capital.

I. Combating Impunity

The two governments discussed ways to cooperate within the framework of the Honduran strategy for combating impunity and recognized that the High Level Bilateral Human Rights Working Group provides a unique mechanism to facilitate cooperation on enhancing the rule of law in Honduras. The two governments discussed their shared concern over the high levels of violence in Honduras and the number of journalists, LGBT persons, women and members of other vulnerable populations who have been threatened, harassed or killed in recent years.

The Governments of Honduras and the United States affirmed that protecting vulnerable groups in Honduras is a priority that calls for a shared commitment, and discussed ways of cooperating toward progress in this area, including the vigorous implementation of the new comprehensive anti-human trafficking law and the provision of services and shelter for victims. Honduras and the United States also decided to jointly track and review a set of emblematic human rights cases to

identify obstacles in the investigation process and to focus resources for effective prosecutions in the short and medium terms.

II. Justice and Security Sector Reform

The Honduran government is working to address issues that limit the capacity, transparency, and effectiveness of its law enforcement and judicial institutions, including an ongoing vetting and reform process for the National Police. Central to improving citizen security, the two governments identified cooperative mechanisms to strengthen the Honduran strategy for justice and security sector reform. They also discussed accomplishments, shortcomings, as well as strategic milestones over the next twelve months for the improved functioning of Honduran security institutions, including the Directorate for the Investigation and Evaluation of the Police Career. The two governments affirmed the importance of demonstrating concrete progress by building on the initial efforts of the Commission to Reform Public Security. Honduras and the United States recognized the need to strengthen the vital role that non-government organizations play in guiding these reforms and in building the confidence of Honduran citizens in their law enforcement and justice systems. Both governments commended the Alliance for Peace and Justice, a coalition of civil society organizations, for its leadership in encouraging meaningful progress in justice and security sector reform.

III. Strengthening Human Rights Institutions

Honduras and the United States discussed the National Strategy on Human Rights and the implementation of the recommendations from the 2011 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as well as the strengthening of the TRC Recommendations Monitoring Unit. The two governments committed to renew their efforts to strengthen human rights institutions and the important role that civil society plays in defending human rights. The two governments affirmed the importance of building and maintaining collaborative relationships with civil society organizations, and strengthening the ability of human rights advocates and journalists to serve as credible observers of the government and the state.